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ABSTRACT

The report of the conclusions of the first annual workshop of the Association of Philosophy Teachers is presented. Points brought out include: (1) The Washington Community College System's philosophy teachers are frustrated in accomplishing their mission; (2) Because of poorly-defined roles, community college philosophy teachers' efforts are frequently dissipated; and (3) Community College philosophy programs are unduly impeded by mediocre management and impoverished resources. (CK)

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MANIFESTO PRYTANEI (1973)

This report of the conclusions of the first annual workshop of the Association of Philosophy Teachers, August 20-24, 1973, at Skagit Valley College represents only the consensus of the faculty participants and does not reflect official positions of the sponsors.

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Background

The Washington State Community College System was organized in 1967, composed of twenty-two districts--each serving a geographically and demographically distinct clientele. In management, the districts diverge in mission and style; for that reason, the System is not regimented into uniformity; it is best conceptualized according to the "family resemblance" model.

The community colleges were enjoined by the state legislature to conduct four kinds of programs:

--lower-division, college-transfer courses
--occupational education
--continuing education
--community service

Skagit Valley College, for example, one of the oldest System components, was founded in 1926. Its first two chief administrators, Dr. G. E. Lottfield and Professor Charles Lewis, taught philosophy as major duties.

The Association of Philosophy Teachers was founded in 1968 on the initiative of Mr. Donald Jones at a meeting of the Northwest Conference on Philosophy at Central Washington State College. The APT's function is to conduct informal discussions of concern to community college philosophy instructors: pedagogy, community service, and program management.

Acting on the suggestion of the Council for Philosophic Studies, the APT conducted a pilot workshop in August, 1973. The major concerns addressed were:

(1) the frustration of philosophic missions within the System
(2) philosophers' ambiguous roles
(3) insufficient managerial and logistic support

These concerns were found to be interrelated, both conceptually and practically.

The results of the workshop's discussions are summed up in what follows. We hope the reader can use the perspectives contained for at least the following purposes:

--writing program documentation, eg. budget requests

--organizing work into new and more effective ways

--reviewing department activities against alternative models

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INFORMATION

I. The Washington Community College System's philosophy teachers are frustrated in accomplishing their mission.

A critical element of every philosophy program can be derived from translating the disciplinary intent proclaimed by Socrates in his *apologia*:

> The student should be persuaded to examine and seek self-knowledge before prosecuting what he believes to be his interests; to evaluate his society as a preliminary to participating in its processes.

Current social conditions dictate that a thoughtful life must be undertaken by most if not all of the citizenry; historic experience indicates that this process cannot be healthily terminated.

As an example, the workshop considered some of the up-grading efforts of Community College District #4. Percieving a trend toward behavioristic teaching models, the District's philosophy department explored the "reductionistic program" of stating at least some of its goals in terms of observable behavior expected to issue from instruction in philosophy. As a result of such study, the verb 'to philosophize' was characterized operationally as...

> A species of verbal behavior in all four modes (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Definitive differentia are:
>
> --preoccupation with foundations of belief and value
>
> --sophisticated level of discourse: concepts, principles, and problem-solving
>
> --frequent use of typical philosophical jargon and reference to individuals and movements within the tradition

Despite theoretical defects inherent in the assumptions of the logical-positivist tradition, this characterization, taken together with a fortunate circumstance of the District's documentation has made it possible to say, succinctly, what its philosophy department is up to...

> THE AIM OF THE PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT IS TO SUPPORT THE MISSION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT #4 BY PROMOTING THE ACTIVITY OF PHILOSOPHIZING.

The "fortunate circumstance" that must be present to make sense of such a goal-statement is the existence of a set of "educational specifications"--a non-contested major premise--which sets forth the intended outcome of the District's educational program. [See Appendix: extract from Community College District #4: Policies and Procedures Manual, PPM 6000.]

Unfortunately, most of the Community College System's Districts have failed to produce functional mission-statements; or if aims are stated, they are given in terms of operations and not expected outcomes. Administrative staffs are prone to become preoccupied with conducting activities while losing sight of ideals to be attained; and since most district-level administrators are not philosophically trained, they tend to hold a truncated view of the place of philosophy in the community college curriculum. Philosophy teachers, then, must undertake either to express their program goals in administrators' restricted view of things, or else to impress philosophy's importance in more effective ways.

District philosophy programs, by tradition, developed within academic (two-year transfer) operations--often with inadequate initial planning and resources. It has been possible to extend lower-division instruction to continuing education activities with minimal adjustments. The scope and quality of the "academic" and "continuing education" efforts are now being threatened by a number of forces; among them: attacks on academic freedom, anti-intellectualism, and even more pernicious, inexplicable blame for a variety of social distresses.

Philosophic fare, set in the traditional "college transfer" course, can be successfully adapted to purposes of occupational education, once the "elitist assumption" is buried and the scope of vocational training is carried to a reasonable extention. Instances of such adaptation:

> --structuring an ethics course around the career-aspirations of the student, examining moral implications of an occupational choice, and specific occupational canons; eg. legal ethics, the "Nursing Code of Ethics"...
>
> --developing courses which explicate such concepts and principles as 'elegance' , 'ecological impact', and 'pride in workmanship' as aesthetic experiences related to a vocation.

Such occupationally enriching training can be rationalized convincingly in terms of Abraham Maslow's motivational theories--well-understood by competent personnel managers.

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In its May, 1972, meeting, the following motion was formulated by the Faculty Association of Community Colleges:

> [The FACC recommends] that the State Board for Community College Education consider the following:
>
> 1) Courses [currently] misdefined as "community services" be redefined as "preparation for leisure".
>
> 2) "Community services" be defined in terms of social problems of importance to people in the community.
>
> 3) Community services be funded on a program basis as a line item of the State Community College budget.

To date, the State Board, after having been duly informed of the motion, has failed to take any action, whatsoever, toward developing this critically important operational mode of public service--and thus has made it all but impossible for the System's philosophy teachers to fulfill this dimension of their obligations to the citizens of the State.

For philosophy in the community colleges, the area of "community service," properly defined and implimented, could be one of the most productive labors a philosopher can undertake: an attack on widespread feelings of fragmentation, alienation, and aimlessness. In present practice, it is an undernourished ragbag of triviality.

II. Because of poorly-defined roles, community college philosophy teachers' efforts are frequently dissipated.

Definitive literature on the community college is shot with remarks about the institution's ill-defined and developing status. If the institution is unsure as to its function and internal operations, its human components are likely to be out of joint.

The Workshop's participants wish to acknowledge the demands of Dean Wheatly's counsel regarding self-knowledge. In established institutions, it would be clearly wrong for a philosophic practioner to undertake the instruction of youth with less than a well-developed self-concept.

For community college philosophers, self-knowledge is even more of moment.

It appears to be of little difference whether the philosopher attains and expands self-knowledge through Western "disciplinary" models or through Eastern "tao" or "yoga".

But to procede beyond his own personal life, the community college philosopher must be able to introduce his various clients to an approach to self-discipline most appropriate to the individual client--thus, he has the obligation to master a variety of "ways to the top of the mountain."

Such demands on the community college philosopher cannot be answered unless his institutional time and contracted attention are spent wisely and efficiently.

The foregoing certainly places strenuous obligations on the teacher, personally; it also means that the institution's leadership should be able to manage personnel resources with more than mediocre skill.

III. Community College philosophy programs are unduly impeded by mediocre management and impoverished resources.

The Workshop's participants hope to leave off the traditional faculty pastime of administrator-baiting with the following remarks:

> --if administration is institutionally necessary to the learning process, then administrators should be accountable for their work in terms of learning accomplished
>
> --at a time when highly creative and perceptive management is required, the Community College System can ill-afford mediocrity in key administrative positions

We hope that the System can encourage district administrative teams to improve their performance as leaders of multi-valued, democratic institutions of learning.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

At the end of the recent legislative session, our State Director, Mr. John Mundt, publicly stated that the appropriated budget was "a disaster" for community colleges. We wish to endorse Mr. Mundt's position on this matter.

Furthurmore, we find the legislature's performance worthy of speculation; is it their intention to deny the citizens of the State access to quality education?

Beyond the issue of appropriations, there is a second allocation issue: *the cost of eliciting life-examining behavior is not reasonably assessed, even with the current alleged paucity of resources.*

1. Given District #4's example--that of defining 'philosophizing' as a species of communication--the student/teacher ratio should be similar to that of English and foreign-language programs; typical practice within the System is to assign 50% more students to a philosophy teacher than to his communication-skills counterpart. The usual excuse given is that philosophy has always been a low-cost program, an therefore should continue to be.

2. In 1969, the Association of Philosophy Teachers recommended that in philosophy programs taught by conventional lecture-discussion methods, teachers be assigned no more than 100 student-contacts per term in order to assure that an optimum of individual attention be available to the student. This guideline has had no effect on the System's decision-making.

3. Since that time, several of the Association's members have done research in "non-traditional" teaching methods (eg. learning laboratory settings which approximate the English tutorial system more than anything else!) Their experience and research into costing of other modes in similar disciplines indicates that while differing effects are achieved by adopting new methods and media, costs remain approximately constant.

4. We recommend, therefore, that the System seek to fund philosophy programs at a level of not less than $1200/full-time-equivalent student directly to program usage and exclusive of institutional overhead.

Appendix

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY FOR THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 4

Introduction

The *senior goal* of Community College District No. 4 is to facilitate student's learning (1) so that they can attain realistic goals commensurate with their needs and abilities; (2) insofar as the public is willing to support the effort.

The *primary means* for achieving this goal is the District's educational program; all other functions of the District are justified insofar as they support learning.

The *purpose of learning* is to achieve self-realization and self-support with self-respect.

General Statement of Policy

While the result of some learning is intangible, most learning is indicated by a change in the behavior of the learner. Some changes represent new departures for the student; others are simply further refinements and developments of skills, viewpoint, and knowledge.

Within each segment of the student's program of studies, he should progress toward one or more of the following accomplishments:

1. being able to define and solve *problems* on the basis of relevant facts and plausible alternatives. The student should be aware of the relationship between his solutions and social customs.
2. identifying a *pattern of living* he prefers and a means of achieving it;
3. achieving occupational and professional proficiency—
   a. for some students, the completion of their study should provide for securing and maintaining employment. The student should also be prepared to participate in upgrading and retraining to maintain his employability;
   b. for others, the completion of their study should provide satisfactory progress toward goals which may require further training at senior institutions or specialized technical schools;
4. maintaining and improving mental and physical *health.* The student might also identify one or more recreational activity which he can practice throughout his life;
5. interacting with *other people* intellectually, socially, and physically. The student's education should insure that he has requisite communication skills and knowledge to participate in society;
6. accepting *responsibility* for himself: for the pursuit of his own interest and welfare without undue dependence on others; for his actions and inactions and for their effects on other people; and for his obligations to other people.
7. it is desirable that a student be acquainted with his *heritage.* This body of knowledge includes the sciences as well as the humanistic disciplines. The student should:
   a. show evidence that he has *organized* his learning in a pattern consistent with his educational objectives;
   b. *relate* his learning to the conduct of his life;
   c. *respond* knowingly to elements of his heritage;
   d. *seek* out *further learning;*
   e. participate actively in the *development* of his culture.